AN ANSWER TO A Late PAMPHLET,

CALLED

An Eſſay concerning Critical and Curious Learning;

In which are contained

Some ſhort Reflections on the Controverſie

Betwixt { Sir *William Temple*, and Mr. *Wotton*. }

AND THAT

Betwixt { Dr. *Bentley*, and Mr. *Boyle*. }

London: Printed and Sold by *E. Whitlock*, near *Stationers-Hall*, 1698.

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SIR,

I Thank you for the Pamphlet you ſent me the other Day; and, becauſe you was pleas'd to make it the *Condition* of your *Gift*, that I

ſhould return my Thoughts upon it, I have here ſent them by the firſt Poſt, and I believe much ſooner than you expected. You have them in the very Order they at firſt occurred to me, without any manner of Correction; for truly I did not think it worth my while to make any.

Firſt then, It is obvious to remark, that the Author, whoever he is, has given his *Eſſay* a wrong Title. If he had had a mind to deal honeſtly with his Reader, it ſhould have run thus: *An Eſſay*, &c. *in which are contained ſeveral Falſe and Scandalous Reflections on* Chriſt-Church *in* Oxon. But to turn over the Title Page. In his Preamble (where, I aſſure you, he pretends abundance

dance of Modeſty) he cannot forbear making open Proclamation, that he, and his Friend, to whom he addreſſes this Piece, have reſolv'd to cenſure and damn all Books that ſhall be hereafter publiſhed; to which purpoſe they have eſtabliſhed a Critical *Correſpondence between them.* Wo be to all poor Writers for the Future! But he has given the World no reaſon to hope well of this grand Deſign. For in the preſent Caſe (which it ſeems is the firſt he has meddled in) he is far from being ſo fair and equitable a Moderator as he ought, or indeed as he himſelf would pretend to be. For he has every where ſhewed that *Dogmatical Humour and Arrogance* he blames in others, and

has taken a moſt intolerable Freedom where he ought not to have done it. I have but two Reaſons to think that Dr. *Bentley* himſelf did not write this Treatiſe. One is, that the Matter is infinitely too polite, and the Stile too ſmooth and flowing for him: The other, that I hardly believe his Self-Love and Pride would have ſuffer'd him to have dealt ſo freely and juſtly with his own and his *Friend*'s Character, tho' it was the moſt likely way to do him a real Service at the bottom. For theſe Reaſons I muſt acquit the *Doctor*, and tell you, that I rather believe the Author to be an *Eſquire*, as he calls himſelf, and one of thoſe mighty *Wits* amongſt you in Town, that ſet up for the

Over-

Overthrow of Religion; who, the better to gain their Ends, lay hold on all Occaſions of traducing the Univerſities, and undermining the Dignity and Character of the Clergy. And tho' I have ſaid this of him, yet it is no wonder that he is Dr. *Bentley*'s Friend and Acquaintance.

But I would gladly know what there is in this Piece, that ſhould make it gain ſo mighty a Reputation, as you ſay it has; and, particularly, how it comes to deſerve your Eſteem, notwithſtanding the Averſion you are pleas'd to ſay you have to the *Satyrical Stuff* in it. It is indeed called (I ſhould ſay miſcalled) *An Eſſay concerning Critical and Curious Learning*; which, I muſt own, is a very

promising Title, and one might reasonably expect something new and delicate upon so nice an Argument. It came to my Hands with an extraordinary Advantage, in that it had your Recommendation. I durst not, upon the first Reading, pass any Censure upon it. I suspended my Judgment, and read it over again and again; but I lik'd it worse every time I did so. I cannot indeed but acknowledge I had some Reason to be biass'd, when I found the Worthy and Reverend *Dean of Christ-Church* so undecently treated, and the Reputation of his whole Society arraign'd in a most imperious and insolent manner.

The

The ſerious part of this Piece is nothing but a *Farrago* of common Notions, put indeed into tolerable good Language. But the Author talks ſo very abruptly, and has ſo cramp'd himſelf upon every Head, that what he ſays of his Performance in Jeſt, may very well be apply'd to it in good earneſt; *viz. that by endeavouring to ſay a great deal in ſo narrow a compaſs, and ſhort a time, he has ſcarce ſaid any thing.* But why did not our *Eſſayer* take a wider compaſs and a longer time for this mighty Undertaking of his? What Provocation had he to ſpeak to any Subject, unleſs he would have done it to purpoſe? Was it a Task impoſed upon him, which he was willing

ling to get off his Hands as ſoon as he could; and was he at the ſame time obliged to print it? When he delivers his own Opinion, and gives the finiſhing Turn to any Argument, he does it in as poſitive, deciſive a manner, as if Dr. *Bentley* himſelf had done it. He bears down all before him; and, when he is going to prove ſome ordinary known thing, puts himſelf into as great a Sweat and Tumult, as if he was about ſome of the knotticſt Problems in all *Mathematicks*, and was doing no leſs than *ſquaring the Circle*. To make a Shew of much Learning (a Qualification not very common amongſt the *Wits*) he runs through all the *Sciences*, but after

after a very odd manner. For when the Reader expects ſome handſome Account of them, he baulks him with lame and imperfect Definitions. He pretends to have preſſed his Matter very cloſe; but it is ſtill ſo ſpungy, that it may be ſqueezed much cloſer, and fairly reduc'd into nothing. I have often heard honeſt *Will P*---- talk as roundly over a Glaſs of Wine of all kinds of Learning and Languages, as our Author, without ever ſuſpecting him to have any clear or full Notions of what he was about. There is a ſort of Common-place, which any Man, that keeps good Company, may be eaſily furniſhed with, and yet at the ſame time be no more a

Scholar,

Scholar, than the Pope's Parrot, that could repeat the Creed, by keeping much Company with his Holineſs, was a Chriſtian.

In ſhort, he is ſometimes a proud ſupercilious Critick, ſometimes a dry and ſtarched Common-placer, and always impertinent to his Reader, and inconſiſtent with himſelf. If it was worth while, I would undertake to refute every thing material out of the Eſſay it ſelf. One Sentence contradicts another. He is not of the ſame Opinion two Leaves together. Here you have him crying up *Experimental Philoſophy*, but with abundance of Limitation, as the moſt pleaſant Study in the World, and which

a Man ought to ſpend all his Time in. --- Preſently he forgets this, and talks as loudly for all the other Sciences one after another; only *Mathematicks* and *Metaphyſicks* have the hard hap not to be of the number of his Favourites, when he comes to talk of his beloved Argument, of *Critical Learning in the Modern Acception, as it is taken for a thorough underſtanding of Claſſick Authors, and an exact knowledge of all thoſe Rules, by which Men judge and determine nicely of all the finer Parts and Branches of Humane Literature*; he diſplays all his Force, and is moſt wonderfully inſtructive. He informs his Reader, that *Ariſtotle* was the firſt that drew up theſe Rules into compaſs, made

made Criticiſm an Art; That *Horace*, *Longinus*, and all the Criticks, both Ancient and Modern, drained moſt of their Knowledge from him. This is juſt as much, and no more, than has been ſaid an hundred times in Dedications and Prefaces to Plays. Not only Mr. *Congreve*, *Dennis*, *&c.* but even *Settle* and *D'urfey* have often ſaid it before him; and moſt of them in their preſent Controverſie with Mr. *Collier*, make nothing of talking of *Ariſtotle*, as familiarly as this Gentleman, without ever having read one Word of him. But he goes on victoriouſly, and ſays *Criticiſm* is without all doubt a very good thing, notwithſtanding what ſome Peo-

People ſay of it: And hath a pretty Similitude about *Alexander* and *Cæſar* nothing to the purpoſe, from whence however he inferrs, as faſt as Hops, the great Advantage of Critical Knowledge. Such Deductions are of the ſame Stamp with his Friend's Dr. *Bentley's*. But I am ſure I argue more logically, when I ſay that becauſe Dr. *Bentley* writes falſe Latin and falſe Engliſh, that therefore, by way of contrary he is in the right of it; for a good Cauſe may be, and often is, ill defended. After having muſter'd up all this, he leaves his Argument for a while, and makes a digreſſion *upon the Uſe of Frequent Compoſitions*. Here he crowds his fine

Notions

Notions very thick upon us; and, to ſingle out one from amongſt many, he tells us, that *all the Faculties of the Mind, whether Active or Paſſive, are mightily heightened and improved by Exerciſe.* This Propoſition is certainly true; and ſo it will hold, if I ſhould affirm it of the Faculties of the Body, and illuſtrate my Poſition with the Famous Story of *Milo*, who firſt try'd his Strength in carrying a *Calf*, and by conſtant Application was at laſt able to do as much for an *Ox*. But who could I hope to inform by it? Is any body, that had Common Senſe or Learning before, made ever a-whit the wiſer for this? If I ſay, critically ſpeaking, that *Virgil* is a better Poet than

than *Martial*, and *Heroick Poetry* nobler than *Anagram*, I talk upon ſafe Grounds, and no Body can contradict me without palpably contradicting the Truth; but what then? When a Man will needs be an Author, eſpecially of *Eſſays*, it is expected he ſhould produce *ardens aliquid*, ſomething new and entertaining: *Montaign* and St. *Evremont* are remarkable for it. There is yet another notable Piece of Criticiſm; and it is, That *Tully* was a better Poet than an Orator: This is true too, and I have nothing to ſay in anſwer to it. But to return with him from this digreſſion: The next thing he preſents us with, is a terrible Deſcription of the Modern Criticks; *viz.*

That they are biaſs'd by Partiality, and, in ſpite of all their ſpecious Pretences, a ſtrong Tincture of ill Nature and Virulence unhappily appears in every Line. They tell us indeed in their Prefaces, that they have dealt very handſomly and candidly with the Authors they comment upon. But when we come to the Remarks themſelves, we are entertained with nothing but continual Snarling and Inſolence. This will prove as true as the reſt of his Axioms and wiſe Sayings, if rightly applied, that is, to himſelf.

I have now run through the *Eſſay*, and ſhould next in order examine his *Reflections* on Mr. *Wotton* and Dr. *Bentley*; but I doubt he plays Booty with them,

them, eſpecially with the latter; or, perhaps, I may be miſtaken, and this inviſible Hero, *Almanzor*-like, kills all before him; ſpares neither Friend nor Foe. Let the Caſe be how it will, I have nothing to ſay to him upon their ſcore. What I have elſe to add, ſhall only be a Word or two in Anſwer to his Complements and Civilities to *Chriſt-Church*. And truly one would be apt to fancy he was never of any Univerſity himſelf, by his being ſo great a Stranger to the Reſpect that is due to the Learned Societies in them. His ill Breeding would make one ſuſpect too he had never been any where elſe neither, nor had had the Education

which young *Squires* uſually have.

In his firſt Attack upon the Colledge, he takes Dr. *Bentley*'s Method, and ſays peremptorily Mr. *Boyle*'s Name is falſly ſet to the late Anſwer to the *Diſſertation againſt* Phalaris's *Epiſtle*, &c. and that he is ſure he had no hand at all in it. This he does out of pure Complaiſance to Mr. *Boyle* as a Gentleman, that there may be no Quarrel between them two; for he is reſolv'd to cut and ſlaſh the Book to Pieces, and without any more to do, ſays it is full of nothing but *little Witticiſms and School-Boys Jeſts*. He begs leave of his Reader (being a very Civil Per-

Perſon) to ſuggeſt his own Opinion. And truly his Opinion is, that it was made (*as moſt Compoſitions in that Colledge are*) *by a Select Club: Every Man ſeems to have thrown in a Repartee, or ſo, in his Turn; and the moſt ingenenious Dr.* Aldrich, *no doubt, was at the Head of them, and ſmoked, and punned plentifully on this Occaſion.* A pretty Conceipt this! What a *Dutch* Image of Wit and Compoſition is here! There is juſt as much Wit and Sence, as Probability and good Manners in it. For when a Gentleman has affixed his Name to a Book, and owned it, ſhall any one that dares do neither, give him the Lie, and pretend Civility at the ſame time? It

was a Clowniſh bold Piece of Freedom at firſt in Dr. *Bentley*, and is now the ſame in this Ambuſcado-Writer. Such rude Treatment would have been abominable to any one of Mr. *Boyle*'s Quality, had he been a Man of no Note, had he never given any Proofs of his extraordinary Genius and great Learning to the World; and as the Caſe is quite otherwiſe, you and the Author muſt pardon me, if I ſay it is downright impudent. But this is only a Sample of ſome more Behaviour of the ſame kind. He has plenty of ſuch Civilities in ſtore for the *Dean* and *Students of Chriſt-Church*, who he takes to be the true Authors of the Book. But he does not trouble himſelf

to

to answer them in any thing material; but, without the least Provocation, takes their manners most severely to Task, puts a mark upon them, and assures his Friend, that *they distinguish themselves from the rest of the University, not by their extraordinary Learning, but their abominable Arrogance.* He wonders how they can have the Confidence to condemn *Pride* in another, when they have so great a Share of it themselves. He would very fain know, *why it is not as excusable in Dr.* Bentley, *who is a Scholar, as in some young Men, who cannot reasonably be supposed to be so.* He is very angry with the *Dean*, and admonishes him for encouraging this haughty proud Temper of theirs by his own Example; and

as a ſtrong Conviction that he does ſo, he calls a ſmall *Compendium of Logick* to witneſs, in which the Dean was ſo unfortunate as to cenſure the Author of the *Art of Thinking*. I know not what Civilities *T. R.* Eſq; thinks are due to Foreigners; he is not very courtly, I am ſure, to his own Country-men. But farther; he ventures to affirm, that the *Compendium of Logick* is one of the worſt that he ever read. The reaſon is, becauſe it is written in *good Latin*. A moſt unpardonable Fault indeed! Well, but this is not all: He has ſomething more to quarrel with them about, and that is for calling Dr. *Bentley* Pedant, when he can prove them to be as rank Pedants themſelves. For (ſays he) *I take*

it to be as errant a Sign of Pedantry to publiſh bad Editions of old Authors, and to be highly ſolicitous about the various Readings of them, which former Editions have only neglected, becauſe they were inſignificant as to lard Engliſh *Writings with* Greek *and* Latin. He is very much in the Right of it; but what is this to *Chriſt-Church*? Yes; it is directly levelled at it. *For* (he continues) *Dr.* Aldrich *is pretty notorious at preſent for imploying his young unexperienced Students this way.* I know not what he means *by employing his young unexperienced Students*: But I know, and, under his Favour, it may be ſaid without any Partiality at all, that thoſe Books which have been put forth by this Colledge, both in the late learned Dr. *Fell*'s time, and

the preſent *Dean*'s too, have a very good Reputation, not only here at home, but are likewiſe much approved by Foreigners abroad; which, I hope, will recommend them to Dr. *Bentley*'s Eſteem, whatever it may do to this Gentleman's. As for the late Edition of *Æſop*'s *Fables*; it will be time enough to defend it, when it is accuſed. Here the *Preface* is only concerned, for calling Dr. *Bentley* plain *quidam*. He would, I ſuppoſe, have had his Name uſhered in with half a dozen Epithets of reſpect; not conſidering how ſcurvily he is uſing Dr. *Bentley*'s Betters all this while. But the next Charge bears hard upon them: For it is about no leſs than *two Epigrams* and one *Verſe*, in a Poem, intituled,

led, *Articuli Pacis*, which he has found in a Book lately publiſhed, called, *Examen Poeticum duplex*, &c. He is very ſolicitous (it being a Matter of vaſt Conſequence) to diſcover the Author of them; and at laſt ventures to affirm, that either the *Dean* himſelf, or ſome body elſe made them. The Conjecture is not much unlike that of the *Dutch Commentators* about *Horace*'s Mother, who, after all their Enquiry, could not be poſitive who ſhe was, but they unanimouſly agreed that he certainly had one. This being ſagely premiſed; he proceeds to give Dr. *Bentley* ſome Comfort, and to infuſe a Balm into the Wound, the Sting and Venom in the Tale of theſe wicked *Epigrams* might poſſibly have

have made in his Mind, aſſuring him *en Critique*, that theſe are by no means the beſt Copies in that Collection. As to this; if there was any need of an Apology (which I do not apprehend there is) it might be alledged as a good one, that *that Collection* was made privately by ſome Gentlemen, that did not think fit to own themſelves, and the *Poems* ſpoken of were inſerted without the Author's Leave or Knowledge; and therefore they are not ſtrictly obliged to account for them. But this is not very much to the Point in hand, and I ſhall wave it.

Here our Critick had juſt ended his Reflections, but that ſomething came into his Head, that

that was once ſaid by one *Joannes in Nudibus*, which he could not let go unanſwered. The Words are; *If the Doctor had had either good Sence or good Manners, he would not have fallen ſo haſtily upon a learned Body, that was ſo very able to juſtifie it ſelf, and to confound him. It was the moſt likely way to make a Shipwreck of the little Reputation he had got.* But even as he has mangled and qualified this Objection, he has not taken it off ſo clearly as he imagines he has done. He would not have had the *Doctor* begun this Diſpute, becauſe the Colledge was below ſo great a Man's Reſentments. And he now adviſes him not to anſwer any Part of Mr. *Boyle's* Book, *becauſe, that which is abuſive is ſo blunt and ungenteel*

teel, that it cannot affect his Reputation at all; and the Authorities in the other are ſo falſly cited and miſapplied, that they anſwer themſelves. For many Reaſons of the ſame Nature, I would not have given you ſo much trouble about this Pamphlet, had not you obliged me to it; and if you find my Stile rugged and unpleaſant (as I doubt you will) you muſt blame you ſelf, and excuſe,

SIR,

Oxon, Aug. 6th 1698.

Yours, &c.

FINIS.